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The last supper

Dr. Mel White is a man who is feared.

He is not a caricature of a gay man looking for a good time. Unfortunately for some Christian groups, White is larger than life anyway.

Indeed, the reverend who led a "fast for understanding" at the base of Focus on the Family headquarters for seven days last week was identified at this year's Colorado For Family Values national conference as a vocal reminder that within the church, the national anti-homosexual movement means a house divided.

White, who helps lead the largest gay and lesbian church in the country, once wrote speeches and biographies for Christian heavyweights like Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham and Pat Robertson. He said his daughter and Dr. James Dobson's son went to the same school.

He once believed he was possessed by demons because he is gay. After undergoing a hundred-thousand dollars worth of Christian counseling, electroshock treatment and two suicide attempts, White emerged an ex ex-gay.

"I didn't want to be queer," he said. But now he's been with his partner Gary Nixon for 10 years, and White said he is whole.

"They think it's about sex. It's about intimacy."

The night before he was to launch his fast, White agreed to an interview with *The Independent.* Faced with the prospect of consuming only water and Gatorade for 168 hours, he was only a little nervous. He was also very peaceful. Alluding to the Bible several times, he seemed to be guiding himself toward his impending spiritual journey. It was the first time he has resorted to the time-honored Christian tradition of the fast. White was not without humor.

"If this was your last meal, what would you order?"

He picked the ravioli, and asked for shrimp on top.

White believes that Colorado Springs-based Focus on the Family and its leader, Dr. James Dobson are at the center of a national movement to single gays and lesbians out for discrimination. This year Dobson's ministry reported a $96 million budget – more than the Vatican's budget. It has regularly condemned gay and lesbian people through its radio broadcasts, White charged.

White has recorded many inflammatory statements broadcast by Dobson about gays and lesbians in America over the last three years:

- They want to overthrow American values
- They recruit, abuse and molest children
- They have a militant agenda that is anti-Christian
- They are more promiscuous sexually than non-gays
- They are a threat to the military
- They are not suitable or trustworthy parents
- They should not be allowed custody in divorce
- They should not hold responsible positions in schools or churches
- They lead godless, sinful lives

Greg Worthen

Dr. Mel White kicking off his seven-day fast at the base of Focus on the Family.

White vowed to approach Focus on the Family daily in attempts to open dialogue with the ministry. Dr. Dobson was in London, reportedly working on a book, but last Wednesday White was invited in and met with Focus vice presidents Tom Minnery, H.B. London and Paul Hetrick.

White reported the meeting went "wonderfully," with London especially being open and reconciling.

"He said at the end 'there's got to be a way we can love and live with each other,'" White said.

Four hours later the ministry's public policy department issued a five-page "social research brief" refuting many of White's assertions.

— Cara DeGette

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stunt riders
safety demonstrations
and more...

artists
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gymnastics
and more...

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